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Predictors of Rape Myth Acceptance Among Male Clients of Female Street Prostitutes

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Abstract

Although female street prostitutes are frequent victims of violence, there has been little research on their male clients. This study explores the level of "rape myth acceptance" and the predictors of rape myth acceptance among 1,286 men arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes in San Francisco (n = 950), Las Vegas (n = 254), and Portland, Oregon (n = 82). Rape myths are attitudes believed to support sexual violence against women. Questionnaires were administered to arrested clients prior to participation in programs designed to discourage reoffense. Results indicate low levels of rape myth acceptance among respondents, although a small number expressed higher levels. The strongest predictors of rape myth acceptance in regression analyses were attraction to violent sexuality, sexual conservatism, and thinking about sex less frequently.

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Ordinary or Peculiar Men? Comparing the Customers of Prostitutes With a Nationally Representative Sample of Men

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Abstract

Recent media attention implies that prostitution seeking is widespread, an “ordinary” aspect of masculine sexual behavior. Other accounts suggest that customers are “peculiar,” characterized by distinct qualities, perversions, or psychological impairments. Using the nationally representative General Social Survey (GSS), this study demonstrates that prostitution seeking is relatively uncommon. Only about 14% of men in the United States report having ever paid for sex, and only 1% report having done so during the previous year. Furthermore, this study dissects whether customers are ordinary or peculiar by comparing a new sample of active customers who solicit sex on the Internet with an older sample of arrested customers, a sample of customers from the GSS, and a nationally representative sample of noncustomers. The customers of Internet sexual service providers differed greatly from men in general and also from other customers. The remaining samples of customers differed slightly from noncustomers in general. We argue for a balanced perspective that recognizes the significant variety among customers. There is no evidence of a peculiar quality that differentiates customers in general from men who have not paid for sex.

Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Do Not Buy Sex: New Data on Prostitution and Trafficking

Abstract

Men who buy sex are increasingly recognized as drivers of the sex trafficking industry. Men’s use of women in prostitution has been described by some as associated with an expression attitudes and characteristics pertaining to of male dominance and sexual entitlement, and as associated with perpetration physical and

sexual violence against women. Other writers have described the sex industry as having little to do with such characteristics. The present study was intended to obtain data pertaining to these assertions. Using structured interviews and self-administered questionnaires, we investigated attitudes and behaviors associated with prostitution and other sexual aggression among 101 male sex buyers and 101 age-, education-, and ethnicity-matched non-sex buyers recruited through newspaper and online advertisements. Both groups of men tended to accept rape myths, be aware of trafficking and the harms of prostitution, express ambivalence about the nature of prostitution, and believe that public exposure and jail time are the most effective deterrents to prostitution. However, sex buyers were more likely than non-sex buyers to see women in prostitution as intrinsically different from other women, had less empathy for women in prostitution, scored higher on a measure of hostile masculinity, were more likely to hold attitudes that justified and normalized prostitution, and reported both a greater likelihood to rape and a greater prevalence of actual sexual aggression.

Keywords: prostitution, trafficking, hostile masculinity, rape, sex buyers, violence against women

Comparing Sex Buyers with Men Who Do Not Buy Sex: New Data on Prostitution and Trafficking

Researchers studying prostitution (and pornography as well as a form of prostitution) have been largely polarized into two camps, varying greatly on whether they conceptualize such acts as essentially just a form of labor (e.g., Sanders, O'Neill, & Pitcher, 2009) vs an expression of male dominance and sexual entitlement and even a manifestation of sexually violent inclinations (Dworkin, 1997; Farley, 2004; Farley et al., 2011). (Farley, 2004). Such differences may be traced to fundamentally differing ideological, political, and philosophical ideologies and their associated "underlying questions of power, resistance and the possibility of female sexual agency under patriarchy" (Bernstein, 2009; p. 91).

In regards to empirical research, as Weitzer (2007) has noted, there are diverse forms of prostitution and one need shy away from simple generalizations that fail to consider the complexities involved in various acts classified within such a rubric. One generalization that may be appropriately made, however, concerns research on this topic – the vast majority of research focuses on women in prostitution (Perkins, 1991), despite the fact that men who buy sex are increasingly recognized as drivers of the "economy" of prostitution (Di Nicola, Cuaduro, Lombardi, & Ruspini, 2009; Anderson & O'Connell Davidson, 2003; Shively, Kliorys, Wheeler, & Hunt, 2012). While some research has sought to establish the prevalence of men's use of women in prostitution, estimates vary widely, probably strongly influenced by sample selection: 16% (Michael, Gagnon, Laumann, & Kolata, 1994), 45% (Monto, 1998), 69% (Kinsey, Pomeroy, & Martin, 1948), and 80% (Benjamin & Masters, 1964).

In examine differences between men who use prostitutes and those who do not, it is important to keep in mind that customers represent a diverse group and any generalizations about the characteristics of such men need to be qualified by the recognition that while certain descriptors may apply to some of a substantial percentage of these men, there are also many to whom these characterizations may not apply. For example, although Sawyer, Metz, Hines & Brucker (2002) found that significant psychopathology may exist among as many as one-third of men who use women in prostitution, a much higher percentage than found among men generally, at least with the use of the MMPI measure they relied on. At the same time, such data indicate that significant psychopathology was not found in 2/3 of the sample.

Much of the research on customers of prostitutes has relied on small samples and qualitative interviews. Exceptions are illustrated by the research of Monto & McRee (2005), who compared a large sample of men (N = 1672) arrested for trying to hire street prostitutes with nationally representative samples of men. They found small but statistically significant differences with customers being less married or happily married, more sexually liberal, and thinking about sex and masturbating more often.

A recent study of male customers of prostitutes was recently published by Monto & Milrod (2014). These investigators used the nationally representative General Social Survey (GSS) to obtain various samples and concluded that prostitution seeking is not common: Only about 14% of men in the United States reported having ever paid for sex with an actual person (as contrasted to pornography use), and only 1% reported having done so during the previous year. This study compared a sample of men who regularly use prostitutes, soliciting them on the Internet, with a sample of arrested customers (who often solicited street prostitutes), a sample of customers from the GSS, and a nationally representative sample of noncustomers. However, the study was quite limited by having as dependent variables only those variables that were already included in the GSS and were not chosen with this study specifically in

mind. These included demographic variables and a few questions pertaining to sexual behavior and attitudes, totaling 13 variables. Some demographic differences were found. When it came to sexual variables, significant differences were found between the arrested sample and non-customers but considerably less between the non-customers and the Internet solicitors. Overall, the researchers concluded that there wasn't "a peculiar quality" that differentiates customers in general from non-customers.

The studies described above have not systematically focused on the particular factors most relevant to the two polarized views of prostitution describes at the introduction to this paper, i.e., prostitution as a form of labor vs. a manifestation of male domination, entitlement and sexually violent inclinations. To examine the latter theoretical perspective, it would be useful to have as a guide a model of the characteristics of men who are more prone to sexual aggression. This would enable assessment of whether customers of prostitutes differ from non-customers on some of the same factors as those distinguishing men more at risk for sexual aggression than those a relatively low risk for such aggression. If such parallels were found, this would not necessarily indicate that use of prostitutes is a form of sexual violence but it would begin to more systematically address the question of whether there may be some common origins to both sexual aggression and to prostitution (at least for some men) as founded in certain root causes, such as a cultural climate that may breed an ideology treating women as a "commodity" to be used in ways that differ from respectful humanized forms of social interactions.

The characteristics most consistently associated with men who may have relatively higher proclivity for sexual aggression have been successfully identified and integrated within the Confluence Model (CM) of Sexual Aggression (for a review, see Malamuth & Hald, in press). After assessing the utility and overlap among of a wide variety of factors, the CM successfully narrowed down these correlates into a manageable set of factors and showed that they may be meaningfully organized into two main interrelated clusters or constellations. The two constellations were labeled the "Hostile Masculinity" (HM) and "Impersonal Sex" (IS) paths (Malamuth, Sockloskie, Koss, & Tanaka, 1991). The HM Path is a personality profile combining hostile-distrustful orientation, particularly towards women, with associated attitudes supporting aggression against women (e.g., rape myth acceptance), and (b) sexual gratification from controlling or dominating women. The IS pathway reflects a certain developmental history culminating in adulthood in a relatively promiscuous "detached" or impersonal orientation towards sexual relations. There has been a great deal of support for this model among non-criminal samples (see Malamuth &

Hald, in press, for a recent summary). Men who are more at risk for sexual aggression have been found to be relatively high on both of these constellations of IS and HM.

Interestingly, some of the research on prostitution described above has already shown differences between customers and non-customers that correspond fairly well to the IS promiscuous or impersonal orientation to sexuality (Monto & Milrod, 2014; Monto & Mcree, 2005). With regards to the HM constellation, the data are less clear. In various studies using selected samples of men, primarily in countries other than the U.S., purchase of sex has been found to be associated with perpetration of some forms of gender-based violence, including physical and sexual violence against intimate partners in countries such as Thailand (Decker et al., 2009), among African-American men recruited from urban health clinics (Raj et al., 2008) as well as rape of both partners and non-partners among young South African men (Jewkes et al., 2006).

Among men who bought sex, rape myth acceptance has been associated with more frequent use of women in prostitution in some studies (Monto & Hotaling 2001; Farley, Macleod, Anderson, & Golding, 2011) but not others (Klein et al., 2009). Men's favorable opinion of prostitution has been reported to be one of a cluster of attitudes and opinions that encourage and justify violence against women (Flood & Pease, 2009; Koss & Cleveland, 1997). In contrast, some qualitative research of customers of prostitution have suggested that "the sexual scripts of the 'regular' male client can "mirror the traditional romance, courtship rituals, modes and meanings of communication, sexual familiarity, mutual satisfaction and emotional intimacies found in 'ordinary' relationships." (Sanders, 2008, p. 401).

This study seeks to primarily address the question of whether men who buy sex score higher on the factors included in the HM constellation and sexually aggressive inclinations or behaviors by collecting data from both men who buy sex and from age-, ethnicity-, and education-matched men who do not buy sex. **Method**

Respondents

Recruitment. Respondents were recruited via newspaper and online advertisements in Boston, MA. The advertisements sought men 18 and older for two-hour, face-to-face interviews in a study of sexual attitudes and behaviors. Interviews were conducted with 101 sex buyers and 101 non-sex buyers. Non-sex buyers were matched to sex buyers' age, ethnicity, and education.

Definitions. Sex buyers were defined as men who in response to a question from a phone screener acknowledged that they had bought sex from a woman or man in prostitution, escort, sex worker, or massage parlor worker or had exchanged

something of value (such as food, drugs, or shelter) for a sex act. We defined non-sex buyers as men who had not purchased the services of a prostitute, sex worker, massage sex worker, or escort, phone sex, or a lap dance; had not been to a strip club more than once in the past year; and had not used pornography more than once in the past week.

We determined that there were likely to be sufficient numbers of men to constitute our non-sex buyers group even if we included a requirement of infrequent pornography use (less than once in the past week). Today online pornography is a seamless arm of the sex trafficking industry in that women are photographed, advertised online, and trafficked in live-streamed prostitution as well as in various sex industry physical locations (MacKinnon, 2011). Our decision to include men who used pornography less frequently than once a week was based on data from two studies of the prevalence of pornography use among men in higher education settings. In a study of 595 men attending United States colleges, 76% were using pornography on the Internet (Neil Malamuth, personal communication, September 7, 2009), and in another study, 48% of 313 men aged 18-26 attending United States colleges used pornography once a week or more often (Carroll et al. 2008).

Procedure

Informed consent was provided and interviewees' questions answered. Interviewees were anonymous and were not asked for their real names. The interviewees were provided contact information for a social worker who was available for in-person counseling in the event of distress. The research protocol was approved by Prostitution Research & Education Ethics Review Committee and by the Pacific Graduate School of Psychology Institutional Review Board.

The eight interviewers¹ were provided a week's training in interview techniques and questionnaire administration, including observed interviews, practice interviews,

and techniques of following up the open-ended questions. Because secondary PTSD and symptoms of depression are not uncommon among sexual violence researchers (Mattley, 1997; Zurbriggen, 2002), the training included a discussion of psychological self-care. We provided biweekly debriefing sessions which offered support to interviewers and also served to troubleshoot administrative issues. In about 10% of the interviews with sex buyers, interviewers were very uncomfortable, sometimes feeling unsafe as a result of physical sexual harassment such as being grabbed at across the table.²

Measures

Interviewers used a 150-item structured interview to obtain both quantitative and qualitative data, including the men's history of using women in prostitution, their evaluations and perceptions of women in prostitution and pimp-prostitute relationships, awareness of coercion and trafficking, deterrents to prostitution, and sex education. The structured interview was designed to learn about men's perceptions of women generally, their attitudes toward prostituted women, and their knowledge of trafficking or pimping. Other measures included a 100-item self-administered questionnaire that asked about demographic characteristics, attitudes toward prostitution (including Sawyer's 1998 15-item Attitudes & Beliefs about Prostitution Scale), acceptance of rape myths (using items from the Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale Short Form, Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999), sexual behaviors and condom use, likelihood to rape (Malamuth, 1981; Briere & Malamuth, 1983), and the Sexual Experiences Scale (Koss & Oros, 1982), a measure of sexual coercion. Another measure inquired about hostile masculine identity based on adversarial sexual beliefs, negative masculinity, and dominance as central to love relationships (Malamuth et al., 1991, 1995). We also included some questions about sex education, perceptions of prostitution and sex buyers, empathy towards prostitutes and related topics to explore other areas where differences may be found between customers and non-customers.

Results

Demographic Characteristics

The mean age of the sex buyers was 41 years, ranging from 20 to 75. The mean age of the non-sex buyers was 40, ranging from 18 to 77. Median family income was about \$40,000, with 60% of sex buyers and 50% of non-sex buyers reporting family incomes of \$40,000 or less. About a third of each group had a college degree (32% of sex buyers, 33% of non-sex buyers), with slightly more than half the men in each group reporting less than a college degree (55% of sex buyers, 57% of non-sex buyers), most frequently some college education without a degree (36% of sex buyers, 34% of non-sex buyers). The remaining men reported having a graduate or professional degree (12% of sex buyers and 11% of non-buyers). We approximated the ethnic composition of Boston MA using U.S. Census data (U. S. Census Bureau, 2000; Metro Boston Data Common, 2008). Slightly more than half of each group (56% of sex buyers, 58% of non-sex buyers) were European American, about one-third were African American (32% of sex buyers, 31% of non-sex buyers), and smaller proportions of the sample were Latino or Hispanic (6% of sex buyers, 4% of non-sex buyers), multiracial (4% of sex buyers, 6% of non-sex buyers), Native American (2% of sex buyers, 0% of non-sex buyers), or Asian or Pacific Islander (0% of sex buyers, 1% of non-sex buyers).

A large majority of the men (89% of sex buyers and 93% of non-sex buyers) identified as heterosexual, with fewer identifying as homosexual (4% of sex buyers and 3% of non-sex buyers) or bisexual (7% of sex buyers and 4% of non-sex buyers). No respondents in either group identified as transgendered. Sixty-one percent of sex buyers and 70% of non-sex buyers currently had a wife or girlfriend.

Number of Sex Partners, Fear of Rejection, and Hostile Masculinity

In keeping with the findings of the CM's Prosmiscus/Impersonal Sex constellation

f, the sex buyers had significantly more lifetime sex partners than the non-sex buyers with 76% of sex buyers and 33% of non-sex buyers reporting more than 15 sex partners, $\chi^2 (1, N = 201) = 38.003, p < .001$. Consistent with this finding, more than twice as many sex buyers (70%) as non-sex buyers (28%) said they liked having a variety of sex partners, $\chi^2 (1, N = 201) = 35.947, p < .0001$. More than twice as many of the sex buyers (62%) as non-sex buyers (24%) preferred non-relational, non-committed sex, $\chi^2 (1, N = 201) = 30.013, p < .0001$. *"I personally enjoy intercourse with someone with something there...I'm not saying that prostitutes don't care about people; I'm just saying you don't know this person"*(NSB).

In keeping with the findings of the Hostile Masculinity constellation of the HM model where high hostile men were found to more frequently report having been rejected by women, sex buyers more frequently reported that they feared rejection by women. On a scale of 1 to 7, sex buyers averaged 5.27 (more sensitive to rejection) compared to 3.54 for non-sex buyers, $t (199) = -3.46, p = .001$. The men discussed how prostitution mitigated their fear of rejection: *"It's a service that you can go to for sexual favors if you're too shy to pick up women yourself, if you're insecure"*(SB). Another said: *"[A prostitute] is a person you can practice having sex with and not worry about being judged"* (NSB).

On a scale assessing adversarial sexual beliefs, negative masculinity, and dominance as central to love relationships, sex buyers had a more hostile masculine self identity ($M = 89.8$) than non-sex buyers ($M = 79.7$), $t (197) = -3.44, p = .001$.

Sexual Abuse and Sex Education

There was no statistically significant difference between sex buyers (21%) and non-sex buyers (10%) in the prevalence of reported childhood sexual abuse, $\chi^2 (1, N = 195) = 3.380, p = .066$. Yet the difference approached conventional criteria for statistical significance. A substantial minority of the sex buyers who reported a history

of sexual abuse (41%) stated that their sexual abuse affected their decision to use women in prostitution. Fewer non-sex buyers (9%) saw their sexual abuse as affecting their decision not to buy sex.

There were also differences between the two groups in their experiences of sex education. Sex buyers (18%) were more likely than non-sex buyers (3%) to report that prostitution was discussed in their sex education classes, $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 6.865, p = .009$. On the other hand, more of the non-sex buyers (70% vs 46%) were taught about respect in sexual relationships in sex education classes, $\chi^2(1, N = 116) = 6.64, p = .010$. Sex buyers were more likely (74% vs. 54%) to report that they learned about sex from pornography ($\chi^2(1, N = 180) = 8.07, p = .005$) and to believe that having sex with a prostitute made a man a better lover (58% vs 37%), $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 9.20, p = .002$. Fifty-two percent of the sex buyers and 34% of the non-sex buyers reported that they learned about sex specifically from pornography videos, ($\chi^2(1, N = 179) = 5.74, p = .017$).

Why Men Say that Men Buy Sex or Do Not Buy Sex

We asked sex buyers and non-sex buyers why men buy sex, using an open-ended question (Table 1). Non-sex buyers were more likely than sex buyers to list control, domination, or abuse ($\chi^2(1, N = 202) = 4.03, p = .045$) and addiction, intoxication, or emotional problems ($\chi^2(1, N = 202) = 6.79, p = .009$) as reasons why men buy sex. Comments by sex buyers regarding why they bought sex included " *it mentally makes you superior*," " *I wanted to do something nasty to somebody*," " *the whole thrill of it, prostitute hunting*," and " *If my fiancé won't give me anal, I know someone who will*." A non-sex buyer said that men bought sex because " *they hate women – to punish them*." Other non-sex buyers described sex buyers as men who act as if they are " *entitled to buy someone*" or who " *want to degrade women*."

We asked interviewees what words they would use to describe sex buyers. Sex

buyers more often than non-sex buyers described men who buy sex in terms of dominance, endorsing terms such as *player* (44% of sex buyers vs. 26% of non-sex buyers, $\chi^2 (1, N = 200) = 6.579, p = .010$) or *stud* (20% vs. 7%, $\chi^2 (1, N = 200) = 6.939, p = .008$). Similarly, more non-sex buyers labeled sex buyers as *losers* ($\chi^2 (1, N = 198) = 5.850, p = .016$), *unethical* ($\chi^2 (1, N = 199) = 21.227, p < .0001$), or *desperate* ($\chi^2 (1, N = 201) = 9.859, p = .002$). Fewer non-sex buyers (43% vs 67%) labeled buyers as *normal*, $\chi^2 (1, N = 180) = 11.064, p = .0009$. Several non-sex buyers saw buying sex as symptomatic of an inability to maintain a normal relationship. For example, "*I would see myself as a loser to buy sex...to stoop that low...because you are admitting that you can't have sex with a woman under regular terms.*" Another noted that buying sex seemed "*desperate and sad.*"

Beliefs About Women Who are Prostituted

Sex buyers held a number of beliefs and rationalizations that seemed to justify their involvement in the sex industry. They were more likely to believe that prostituting women are intrinsically different from non-prostituting women. On a Likert scale ranging from 0 to 10 that evaluated this belief, sex buyers' mean rating was 5.09 and non-sex buyers' mean rating was 3.61, $t (197) = -3.09, p = .002$. An interviewee reasoned that the act of taking money for sex was in and of itself evidence of the essential difference between prostituting and non-prostituting women: "*...a real woman will not solicit her body out... Because if she likes you, she likes you and will have sex because she likes you but a prostitute has sex with you because she wants the money.*"(SB) Similarly, another man said, "*Most women won't sell their body for money. They think it's a demeaning thing to do. So just being willing to do that makes a woman different*"(SB).

Empathy

To better understand the extent to which respondents do or do not feel empathy for women in prostitution, we asked them to estimate how women felt during prostitution. We then compared the men's responses to those of women in another study who described how they actually felt during prostitution (Kramer, 2003). Like Kramer, we identified the men's positive, negative, and neutral descriptors of how the women felt. The sex buyers were less able than the non-sex buyers to accurately assess the emotional state (positive or negative) of women in prostitution. The assessment of the women's emotional state by men who did not buy sex was closer to the women's actual feelings during prostitution (Table 2).

Acceptance of Prostitution

We asked how comfortable the men would be with their children's involvement in prostitution. Although a minority of both sex buyers (23%) and non-sex buyers (11%) thought that it would be acceptable for their daughters to work in strip clubs, this attitude was more common among sex buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 5.24, p = .022$. Similarly, more sex buyers (56%) than non-sex buyers (20%) felt that it was acceptable for their sons to go to brothels, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 28.00, p < .001$.

Sex buyers (48%) were more likely than non-sex buyers (26%) to agree with the statement, "most men go to prostitutes once in a while," $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 10.70, p = .001$. More sex buyers (62%) than non-sex buyers (37%) viewed prostitution as "consenting sex," $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 12.94, p < .001$. When the question was framed as "choice," acceptance of prostitution increased in both groups although sex buyers (93%) were more likely than non-sex buyers (66%) to state that women should have the choice to prostitute, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 22.00, p < .001$. Sex buyers (37%) were more likely than non-sex buyers (21%) to state that once sex is paid for, women are obligated to do whatever the buyer wants, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 6.43, p = .011$. Consistent

with these differences, sex buyers (38%) were less likely than non-sex buyers (65%) to view prostitution as sexual exploitation ² (1, N = 200) = 14.59, $p < .001$.

Acceptance of Rape Myths

Many sex buyers and non-sex buyers tended to accept rape myths that normalized and justified sexual violence, in keeping with findings of random samples from the population (e.g., Burt, 1981). The sex buyers had a mean rape myth score of 41.13 compared to the non-sex buyers' mean of 39.74, a difference that was not statistically significant, $t(199) = -1.07$, $p = .287$. When all the men (sex buyer and non-sex buyers) were considered as a single group, the most commonly endorsed statements were, "Men don't usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away" (41% agreed), "Rape happens when man's sex drive gets out of control" (33% agreed), "A woman who dresses in skimpy clothes should not be surprised if a man tries to force her to have sex" (25% agreed), and "Rape accusations are often used as a way of getting back at men" (25% agreed). Among sex buyers and non-sex buyers alike, higher rape myth acceptance scores were associated with believing that prostitution prevents rape, $r = -.33$, $p < .001$. Sex buyers (32%) were more likely than non-sex buyers (20%) to believe that prostitution reduces the likelihood of rape, ² (1, N = 201) = 3.90, $p = .048$. For example, a sex buyer said, *"If a person seeks sex with a prostitute and doesn't get it, he can go into the park and grab a girl and rape or do violence to women...legalized prostitution cuts down violence towards women... doesn't eliminate it, but it will help if it saves 1,2,3 women, then it's served its purpose."* Another said, *"There's desperate people out there. They're frustrated, they can't get laid, so they go out and they're raping people. They get pissed off... Where there is no prostitution, there will be lots of rape; where there is lots of prostitution, no rapes."* (SB)

Self-reported Likelihood to Rape

The two groups differed in their self-reported likelihood to rape. Sex buyers (15%) were more likely than non-sex buyers (2%) to report that they would rape a woman if they could get away with it and if no one knew about it, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 11.00, p < .001$.

Sexual Aggression

The sex buyers were also more likely than non-sex buyers to report that they had actually engaged in sexually aggressive behaviors, with a mean of 1.59 types of sexually aggressive behavior ($SD = 1.83$, range 0 - 10) compared to a mean of 0.53 ($SD = 0.79$, range 0 - 4) among non-sex buyers, $t(188) = -5.63, p < .001$.

Descriptions of Positive and Negative Effects of Prostitution

We asked about the men's perceptions of prostitution's positive effects. Sex buyers were more likely to perceive slightly or very positive effects, whereas non-sex buyers were more likely to state that prostitution has no positive effect on the woman in prostitution: 35% of the sex buyers but 52% of the non-sex buyers indicated no positive effects, 51% of the sex buyers and 45% of the non-sex buyers indicated slight positive effects, and 14% of the sex buyers but only 3% of the non-sex buyers indicated very or extremely positive effects of prostitution $\chi^2(2, N = 201) = 10.94, p = .004$. Likewise, more of the sex buyers (32%) than the non-sex buyers (17%) indicated some positive effects on the community, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 5.69, p = .017$.

We asked interviewees for their views regarding negative consequences of prostitution for women. There were differences between sex buyers' and non-sex buyers' assessments of the negative effects of prostitution, with sex buyers more likely to describe only slight negative effects and non-sex buyers more likely to describe very negative or extremely negative effects of prostitution: 67% of the sex

buyers indicated no or slight negative effects, 19% indicated very negative effects, and 14% indicated extremely negative effects. Of the non-sex buyers, 30% indicated no or slight negative effects, 47% indicated very negative effects, and 23% indicated extremely negative effects, $\chi^2(2, N = 200) = 28.18, p < .001$.

We asked about the effects of prostitution on the community. There were differences between the two groups of men, with sex buyers perceiving fewer negative effects on the community, $\chi^2(3, N = 201) = 9.67, p = .022$. Eleven percent of sex buyers but 23% of non-sex buyers opined that prostitution has extremely negative effects on the community, 29% of sex buyers but 37% of non-sex buyers perceived very negative effects, 46% of sex buyers and 29% of non-sex buyers thought the effects on the community were slightly negative, and 15% of sex buyers and 11% of non-sex buyers thought that prostitution has no negative effects on the community at all.

Awareness of Third-Party Control, Pimping and Trafficking

Forty-one percent of the sex buyers reported having used a woman in prostitution who was controlled by a pimp and a similar proportion (43%) of non-sex buyers had observed a prostituting woman under third-party control. Two thirds of both sex buyers (66%) and non-sex buyers (66%) stated that a majority of women are lured, tricked, or trafficked into prostitution. Many were aware of the economic coercion and the lack of alternatives in women's entry into prostitution. *"The women who are prostitutes, they're single moms, it's not so cut and dry. It's not a conscious choice for them. While they're not literally forced into it - through socioeconomic circumstances they are partially forced into it. And the purchaser is inexorably tied to the bad and the wrong things that go into it. He's not just a harmless customer"* (NSB).

Sex buyers (96%) and non-sex buyers (97%) shared the opinion that minor

children are almost always available for prostitution in bars, massage parlors, escort and other prostitution in Boston. A sex buyer observed a girl he estimated to be about 16 years old. *"She didn't want to do it, she didn't know what she was doing...she was young, she was naive. You KNOW she didn't want to be doing what she was doing."*

One of the sex buyer interviewees reported that pimps asked him to help recruit women for prostitution. Pimps asked him to *"find them certain types of girls in the psych hospital...Then there are other guys [pimps] I knew who picked up kids from the bus stops. I've met girls who are like 15 or 16."*

A sex buyer commented on men who pimped their wives and girlfriends: *"you won't believe how many husbands or whatever force their wives to do stuff like that [prostitute]."* *"...in Chinatown, I think there is less choice, less of a making of one's own life because life is made for them by pimps, drugs, and rape"* (SB).

Opinions about the Legal Status of Prostitution and Deterrents

We asked the men questions about legalization and decriminalization of prostitution and about what they thought would deter men from buying sex. Across several different questions, there was a trend for sex buyers to favor legalized or decriminalized prostitution. More sex buyers (80%) than non-sex buyers (40%) believed that prostitution should be legalized, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 33.52, p < .001$. More sex buyers (73%) than non-sex buyers (45%) believed that prostitution should be decriminalized, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 16.77, p < .001$. More sex buyers (72%) than non-sex buyers (41%) felt that arresting men who use women in prostitution causes more problems than it solves, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 20.14, p < .001$.

Both sex buyers (91%) and non-sex buyers (88%) agreed that the most effective deterrent would be to list sex buyers on an official registry of sex offenders, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 0.479, p = .489$. Next most effective were jail time (80% of buyers, 83% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 0.263, p = .608$) and public exposure techniques such as

having their name or photo publicized on a billboard (84% of buyers, 83% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 0.064, p = .800$), newspaper (82% of buyers, 85% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 0.292, p = .589$), or the Internet (84% of buyers, 85% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 0.027, p = .869$). A majority of both groups viewed greater criminal penalties (70% of buyers, 81% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 3.122, p = .077$), vehicle impoundment (71% of buyers, 82% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 3.219, p = .073$), and driver's license suspension (73% of buyers, 84% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 198) = 3.595, p = .058$) as effective deterrents. They were evenly split on the value of community service as a deterrent, which was seen as effective by 46% of the buyers and 57% of the non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 2.422, p = .120$. The non-buyers were more likely than the sex buyers to predict that effective deterrents would include letters to the man's family reporting his arrest for solicitation (76% of buyers, 88% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 200) = 4.878, p = .027$), larger fines (66% of buyers, 79% of non-buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 4.054, p = .044$), or educational programs (54% of non-buyers, 38% of buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 201) = 5.429, p = .020$).

The men described how much jail time would deter them. For sex buyers, any amount of time in jail would deter 22%; several hours would deter 34%; 3 days would deter 71%; 3 weeks would deter 83%, and one month would deter 100%. Non-sex buyers gave similar responses. The men also described the size of fines that would be necessary to deter them. Among the sex buyers, a fine of \$50 would be sufficient to deter 17%, \$300 would deter 41%, \$500 would deter 66%, \$2,000 would deter 90%, and \$4,500 would deter 100%. Non-sex buyers' predictions were similar.

Many of the interviewees believed that laws against prostitution are rarely enforced and even when enforced, they viewed the laws as having a trivial impact on them. Only 35% of the sex buyers said that there was a 100% likelihood that legal

penalties for buying sex would affect their behavior, compared to 55% of the non-sex buyers, $\chi^2(1, N = 194) = 7.52, p = .006$. A sex buyer advised, *"You'd have to make more severe penalties. You'd have to make it a more severe crime than it actually is. Right now it's not all that punishable, especially for the john it's a slap on the wrist. It's nothing, really, you pay a fine and they'll let you go the next day. . . .[you need] longer incarceration. What scares people more than going to jail? I think it's the largest deterrent. And maybe large fines, but very large fines"* In extended discussions with the men about deterrence and abolition of prostitution, half of the men in each group thought that prostitution would never be abolished

Discussion

This study found similarities and differences between men who bought sex and an age-, income- and ethnicity-matched sample of men who did not buy sex. They had similar views about the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of deterrents. The two groups reported similar experiences of sex education and a similar prevalence of childhood sexual abuse. At the same time, the sex buyers differed significantly from the non-sex buyers in important ways: they had less empathy for women in prostitution, viewing them as intrinsically different from other women. They also held more hostile and misogynist attitudes toward all women, reported higher levels of self-reported likelihood to rape and acknowledged having committed more acts of sexual coercion against women.

Similarities Between Sex Buyers and Non-Sex Buyers

Rape myth acceptance. Sex buyers and non-sex buyers were similar in the extent to which they held rape myths consisting of "attitudes and beliefs that are generally false but are widely and persistently held and that serve to deny and justify male sexual aggression against women" (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 134). Four out

of ten men we interviewed, whether they bought sex or not, agreed that “Men don’t usually intend to force sex on a woman, but sometimes they get too sexually carried away,” and one-third believed that “Rape happens when man’s sex drive gets out of control.” The similarity in rape myth acceptance that we found between sex buyers and non-sex buyers was consistent with findings by Monto and Hotaling (2001). The extent to which the men in this study endorsed rape myths is also comparable to findings from other studies of college-aged men (Banyard, 2008; Cotton, Farley, & Baron, 2002; Girard & Senn, 2008; Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999; Widman & Olson, 2013, Study 1) and community men (Widman & Olson, 2013, Study 2) and can be seen as reflecting American men’s exposure to eroticized violence in the media that normalizes sexual aggression including rape myths (Clarke, 2004).

Awareness of trafficking and harms of prostitution. Two-thirds of both sex buyers and non-sex buyers believed that a majority of women are lured, tricked, or trafficked into prostitution. **Awareness of psychological harms of prostitution.** In their open-ended responses, both groups of men indicated an awareness of the psychological harms of prostitution for women, including adverse effects on the women's self-esteem and on their ability to form close relationships and increased risk of dissociation and substance dependence.

Ambivalence about the nature of prostitution. In spite of their awareness of psychological harms and trafficking, the men’s open-ended responses revealed inconsistencies in both groups' thinking about whether prostitution was a choice or whether it was sexually exploitive. "

Sex education and sexual abuse history. The two groups of men reported that the sex education courses they had taken in their youth had covered generally similar topics, with the exception of prostitution and respect in sexual relationships. They were equally likely to report a history of childhood sexual abuse

although the sex buyers were more likely to interpret the abuse as having contributed to their choices about using women in prostitution.

Evaluation of deterrents. Sex buyers and non-sex buyers held similar opinions about which deterrents to prostitution would be effective. According to both groups the most effective deterrents would be a month of jail time or public exposure in the form of listing on a sex offender registry or having names and/or photographs published in newspapers, online, or on billboards. They considered community service and educational programs to be the least effective deterrents to prostitution (the latter particularly among the sex buyers).

Differences Between Sex Buyers and Non-Sex Buyers

Hostile Masculinity. The construct *hostile masculinity* reflects an orientation characterized by inflated self-evaluation, mistrust of and hypersensitivity to women, and a propensity to find it sexually gratifying to control or dominate women (Malamuth et al., 2000). The finding that sex buyers scored significantly higher on a measure of hostile masculinity than non-buyers suggests a link between this hostility and use of women in prostitution. We were also able to compare responses from the men in the present study to a sample of male college students provided by Malamuth (personal communication, 2014). While we could not run statistical analyses, we note that the sex buyers had a higher mean (56.2) than the college men (51.1) on the sum of the common items measuring hostile masculinity. The college men in turn had a higher mean than the non-sex buyers in the present study (47.3). Some of the scale's items reflect the strength and consistency of these differences. Specifically, sex buyers in the present study assigned greater importance than did either the non-sex buyers or Malamuth's student research participants to items that describe their sexuality as involving power over another person and as including a sense of superiority.

Empathy.

Number of Sexual Partners.

Non-sex buyers were generally uncomfortable with the realization that their sexual partner in prostitution was not reciprocating their desire or was there unwillingly. Some of them appeared to have a greater understanding of the pervasive negative effects of prostitution on their own relationships with women who are important to them. Several non-sex buyers commented on the lack of emotional attachment in transactional sex as a factor in their decision to not buy sex. Our finding that sex buyers had significantly more lifetime sex partners and their preference for non-relational sex was consistent with others' findings that having more sexual partners increased the likelihood of sexual violence perpetration (Heilman, Herbert, and Paul-Gera, 2014).

Likelihood to Rape and Sexual aggression. Sex buyers acknowledged both a greater *likelihood* to rape and a more extensive history of *actual* sexual aggression. Men who had bought sex were more likely to believe that prostitution reduces rape yet at the same time they were also more likely to say they *would* rape if they could be sure of not being caught. Some explained the relationship between buying sex and sexual aggression, for example, "*Prostitution can get you to think that things you may have done with a prostitute you should expect in a mutual loving relationship. For example if a woman doesn't like oral or anal. That's acceptable for someone to have that attitude, but if you're going to a prostitute you're getting it. And you think you should get it no matter what*" (SB). The finding that sex buyers have committed significantly more sexually coercive acts against women than non-sex buyers requires a deeper understanding of all sex buyers as men who are at risk for criminal activity including commission of acts of violence against women in addition to prostitution. Across five countries, Heilman, Herbert, and Paul-Gera (2014) found that men who

held attitudes of male privilege and entitlement and who had bought sex were significantly more likely to rape. Monto & McRee (2005) also found that men who had used women in prostitution had more frequently committed rape in a U.S. sample (Monto and McRee, 2005). In related findings, the Colorado Sex Offender Management Board (2004) lists procuring prostitutes as one of the risk behaviors exhibited by sex offenders. Lussier and colleagues (2007) found that rapists were more likely than non-rapists to buy sex. As a sex buyer in the present study said, *"if you go to a prostitute, you're like, OK, this is a nasty bitch, I'm going to do whatever I want to her."*

Attitudes and beliefs about prostitution. Sex buyers held a greater number of beliefs that rationalized their own and their children's involvement in the sex industry. Sex buyers' greater acceptance of prostitution was articulated in their beliefs that prostitution is a form of consensual sex and is a woman's choice, findings which are consistent with Shively and colleagues' (2008) study in which 63% of 147 men arrested for soliciting sex endorsed the statement that women made the choice to prostitute. Sex buyers were more likely than non-sex buyers to approve of their sons' visiting prostitutes and their daughters' being prostituted, and were more likely to assert that most men buy sex (50% of sex buyers vs 25% of non-buyers). Likewise, sex buyers were more likely than non-sex buyers to describe men who buy sex as *players*, *studs*, or – perhaps most tellingly – *normal*, and less likely to describe them as *losers*, *unethical*, or *desperate*.

As youth, sex buyers were less likely to have been taught about respect in sexual relationships in sex education classes but more likely to have been taught about prostitution in that context. These findings suggest that the way in which prostitution was addressed in the sex buyers' sex education classes may have contributed to normalization of prostitution. It is also possible that men's subsequent experiences influenced their recall of sex education. Sex buyers were more likely than

non-sex buyers to report that they had learned about sex from pornography.

Large majorities of sex buyers favored legalization and decriminalization of prostitution, and saw its illegal status as more problematic than did non-sex buyers. These opinions were held by a minority of the non-sex buyers. Relative to non-sex buyers, sex buyers saw prostitution's effects on the community as more positive and less negative. They were also more likely to believe that prostitution reduces rape. These beliefs may serve to rationalize the use of women in prostitution.

Limitations of This Study

As other researchers of prostitution have noted, it is not possible to obtain a random sample of men who buy sex (Faugier & Cranfield, 1995; McKeganey & Barnard, 1996). The men who participated in this study were recruited through newspaper and online advertisements. It is possible that men who respond to advertisements requesting participation in research in general or those who respond specifically to advertisements requesting participation in research on sexual attitudes may differ in unknown ways from the general population of men including sex buyers. Nonetheless, given the logistical difficulties and high cost of obtaining a sample of men who buy sex who are representative of the general population of sex buyers, our sampling procedure represents a substantial advance over previous studies that relied on samples of men who had been arrested for buying sex. Sex buyers in this study may have been more willing to reveal information about themselves because of the lack of police oversight, their anonymity, and the safety of a familiar public location rather than an official building. The physical and verbal sexual harassment of interviewers by sex buyers would probably not have occurred in a police-sponsored program.

The demographic matches between the two groups in this study removed the likelihood that these differences between men who buy sex and men who don't buy

sex result from the men's age, ethnicity or educational level. Previous studies of sex buyers have not included matched comparison groups.

Much of the information collected in this study was obtained by self-report. It is likely that both sex buyers' and non-sex buyers' responses were influenced by their attempts to respond in a socially desirable direction, a common response set on self-report measures (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) which has been specifically noted in self-reports of men attending batterer intervention programs (Craig et al., 2006). To the extent that a social desirability response set was operating, we can assume that all the men's responses tended to *minimize* the socially undesirable phenomena the men were endorsing, such as sexist attitudes, reports of sexual violence, etc. We suggest therefore that the numbers reported here are conservative and may even be underestimates of the attitudes and behaviors we assessed.

Notes

¹ Interviewers were Matthew Bane, Rebecca Booth-Fox, Lisa Coppola, Melissa Farley, Joanne Golden, Laura Jarrett, Lindsay Markel, Lina Nealon, and Michael Van Wert. Valerie Darling, Asha Kaufman, and Kajahl Valipour were phone screeners for the study.

² Both some sex buyers and the non-sex buyers harassed interviewers with boundary violations or hostile/intrusive questions such as "where do you live?" "dinner is on me," or "do these questions turn you on?" Sexual harassment by sex buyers was more frequent and explicit with women interviewers; sometimes the interviewees treated the women interviewers like they treated prostituted women. For example, female interviewers were asked how they masturbated or had an interviewee's "big dick" described to them. One interviewer commented, "He compared me to what he would have wanted a prostitute to look like. He just said, 'Like you, a stereotypical fantasy girl.'" Several interviewers were propositioned for sex. An interviewer wrote in her notes, "He made me uncomfortable a few times when he stared at me in a certain way and also when he said he liked to use his memory and think of someone he was attracted to as pornography for himself."

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Tables

Table 1. Reasons for Buying Sex

Reason	Sex Buyers	Non-Sex Buyers
Satisfy immediate sexual urge, pleasure, entertainment	26%	17%
No commitment, convenient, no emotional connection	12%	11%
Can't get what he wants sexually or emotionally in his current relationship, seeks variety	19%	20%
It's a thrill; likes to break a taboo	8%	5%
To feel in control; to dominate or abuse a woman	3%	10%
It's an addiction, self-esteem/emotional problem or intoxication	3%	13%
Male bonding, peer pressure	1%	3%

Table 2. Words Used by Sex Buyers, Non-Sex Buyers, and Prostituted

Women to Describe Feelings of Women during Prostitution (n)				
	Positive Feeling	Neutral Feeling	Negative Feeling	Total Words

	Words	Words	Words	
Sex Buyers	40% (182)	17% (76)	44% (201)	459
Non-Sex Buyers	18% (79)	11% (47)	72% (319)	445
Women in Prostitution (Kramer, 2003)	9% (41)	14% (64)	77% (127)	232

